

Last Days of Persecution

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itother must ferocious of all the persecutors,—so St. Jerome speaks of him in comparison with Decius and Moeletian, •- f..favo a brief respite to the Christians in is provinces of I'-jjypt, Cilicia, Palestine, and Syria.

" When I itrsl visited the Kast," Maxhnin wrote,* wie years later, in referring to his accession, " I found Kit a great number of persons who might have been useful > the State had been exiled to various places by the ulges. I ordered each one of these judges no longer to ress hardly upon the provincials, but rather to exhort u*in by kindly words to return to the worship of the otls. While my orders were-obeyed by the magistrates, o one in the countries ol' the Kasl was exiled or ill-•eatctl, but the provincials, won over by kindness, re-trned to the worship of the gods."

Direct contradiction is given to this boast as to he number of Christian apostates by the fact that, 'ithn u twelvemonth, the new Caisar tfrcw tired of rekinf? to kill Christianity by kindness and revoked is recent rescript of leniency, Maximin developed ito a furious hif*<it, He fell wholly under the in dunc of the more fanatical priests and became in-rensintfly devoted to ma^ie, divination, and the black rts. Lactantius declares that not a joint appeared t his table wlmh bad not been taken from some ictim saafiml by a priest at an altar and drenched ;ith the wine of libation, Kdict followed edict in ;ipid succession, until, in the middle of 306, what tasebius describes n« "n secotul tleclnratlon t»f war" MS issued, which ordered every magistrate to compel

* Ku'whui-i, //tit, A.V*/<•*, ix..«).